DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 260 883 RC 015 443

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TITLE Planning a Class Camping Trip. ERIC Digest: Outdoor Education.

INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, Las Cruces, N. Mex.

SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Feb 85
CONTRACT 400-83-0023
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adventure Education; *Camping; *Class Activities; Elementary Secondary Education; Followup Studies; Guidelines; Learning Activities; Outdoor Activities; *Outdoor Education; *Planning; *Resource Materials; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

A well-planned class camping trip is a learning adventure which develops personal values, generates lifelong learning skills, encourages group cooperation, and enhances knowledge of and appreciation for natural environments. This digest is a guide to help teachers offer this unique learning opportunity to their students. Separate sections present prerequisites for the trip (group goals/objectives); basic considerations (group age, skills, available time, travel modes/distances, weather); activities to provide specific learning expectations; assessment of sites and facilities; and options for grouping adults/students to maintain a 1 to 8-12 ratio. Another section details required advance planning activities: determining goals, preparing activity schedules, reviewing camping skills, training adult leaders, scheduling transportation, reserving camp sites, determining costs, collecting payments, preparing for weather and emergency situations, making a kaper chart to distribute camp chores, choosing menus, securing food supplies, procuring camping equipment, reviewing safety procedures, making emergency plans, defining/discussing group rules and regulations, and determining school policies and procedures. A section suggests follow-up activities: continuing classroom learning experiences, cleaning and returning equipment, writing thank-you notes, and preparing written student and adult evaluation reports. A final section lists resources for finding information on camping skills, trip planning, adventure activities, recreation programs, touring, program administration, etc. (NEC)

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ERIC DIGEST

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

PLANNING A CLASS CAMPING TRIP

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February 1985

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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RC015443

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This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education under contract no. NIE-400-83-0023. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of NIE or the Department of Education.

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PLANNING A CLASS CAMPING TRIP

A well-planned class camping trip is a learning adventure which develops personal values and concepts, generates skills for lifelong learning, encourages group cooperation, and enhances knowledge of and appreciation for the natural environment. Good planning will ensure a successful and fruitful trip. This digest is intended to serve as a guide to help teachers offer this unique learning opportunity to their students.

What are the prerequisites for a class camping trip?

A successful class camping trip will take into consideration the purpose of the trip as well as the needs and abilities of the group undertaking it. Adequate planning based on these factors is a special function to be shared by the group and its leaders. The students, under the careful guidance and direction of their leaders, should determine the goals and objectives of the trip and identify ways to accomplish them. They will thus become committed from the outset to making the trip a success. Maximum involvement of each student, stimulated by the teacher's enthusiasm and nurtured by the teacher's ability to lead, will ensure an effective, as well as memorable, camping experience.

What basic considerations are necessary in planning a class camping trip?

Although many types of camping trips are appropriate for educational groups, the one selected should incorporate specific features to match the group's requirements. Among the factors to be considered in deciding on the type of trip to take are the following:

. Characteristics of group members such as age, special needs, and special skills.

- Purpose for which the camping trip is to be made.
- Length of time the trip will last, including traveling time.
- Distance to be traveled, mode of transportation, and destination.
- Activities anticipated and support tasks to be performed.
- Season of the year.

Although longer trips can be planned around holidays, the most prevalent type of trip, and probably the easiest to plan, is car camping to a near-by site for only one or two nights. Car camping is convenient in that the students and equipment are transported to their destination by bus or cars. The group may either remain at that location for their activities or use their campsite as a base camp and take trips from there. Such a trip is easy to plan and organize around the factors presented above.

There are, however, numerous althernatives. For example, groups may consider a camping trip involving other means of travel such as canoeing, bicycling, backpacking, or cross-country skiing. Obviously, these types of trips require specialized skills and equipment. This means special consideration of the group characteristics factor.

What are some camping trip activities?

If a camping trip is planned with a definite purpose in mind, the activities will be dictated largely by the type of group planning the trip. If the group is a specific class (such as history, science, physical education, etc.), a particular grade or home room (such as 4th grade, 9th grade, etc.), or an outing club (such as canoeing, camping, etc.) then it will be unified by that factor.

If students help determine the goals and objectives of the trip, they will have a clear understanding of the educational purpose of the trip. Otherwise, there is a definite risk of lack of cooperation on the part of

students who feel the camping trip is merely an opportunity to get out of the classroom.

The philosophy of outdoor education definitely needs to be instilled in students so that they understand that a camping trip is a privilege and a special opportunity to enhance learning. Specific learning expectations are inherent in well-defined activities, which may be either structured or unstructured. Students may participate in the following learning experiences during a camping trip:

- Observe, identify, and/or collect specimens (leaves, flowers, rocks, etc.).
- View a natural site (canyons, caves, waterfalls, etc.).
- Visit an historical site.
- Use a variety of camping skills (firebuilding, cooking, etc.).
- Participate in outdoor adventure activities (canoeing, rock climbing, rappelling, backpacking, etc.).
- Study the environment (desert, forest, water, etc.).
- Participate in a work project (trail building, soil conservation, etc.)
- View wildlife and its habitat.

What sites and facilities are available for group camping?

Numerous sites suitable for a class camping trip exist. Among these are areas administered by the National Park Service, the state and county recreation and parks department, the Corps of Engineers and other river authorities, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Forest Service. Others include privately owned or agency administered camps and privately owned farms and ranches. Many of the above have group camp sites available by reservation. However, if a large area is not available at an organized

campground, the class can camp on adjoining sites in groups of 8 or 12 per site with an adult leader.

Facilities vary from no conveniences (primitive) to numerous conveniences such as picnic tables, grills, firewood, tent pads, restrooms, showers, potable water, electricity, open shelters, screened shelters, pay telephones, etc. The trip leader should visit the site prior to the trip to determine the exact facilities available. The charge for site use varies from no fee to a fee per site or per individual; existing fee structures are quite reasonable. Camping guidebooks are available in many states and will be a valuable resource when planning the trip. They usually provide lists of campsites and note available facilities and/or conveniences.

How can groups be organized efficiently?

Once the group has identified the external parameters of the trip, such as purpose, duration, destination, etc., it is necessary to organize the group itself. A ratio of one adult to 8-12 students should be maintained, with a minimum of two adults for small groups. The total number of students should be no larger than can be handled safely and effectively for that particular age group. Consideration must be given to the activities planned as well as to the camping situation. A maximum of 32 students with a minimum of four experienced adults as camping supervisors is recommended.

The actual camping situation can also be organized. The participants may choose from options like the following:

- Camp in one group with the meals prepared for the entire group.
- Camp in three or four separate groups of 8 to 12 members each. Each group would prepare the same menu to make meal planning and and food buying easier.
- Camp in three or four distinct groups, with each group planning its own menu. This plan works best with older campers who already have camping experience.

When the group is subdivided, the individual camp sites need not be adjacent to each other. Otherwise, the tenting arrangement may be determined for the group as a whole. In all cases, it is imperative that duties be assigned in advance. Duties should be posted on a "kaper chart" which itemizes such activities as pitching tents, building campfires, cooking, cleaning up, planning and leading evening campfire songs and programs, loading equipment, cleaning the campsite before departing, and others. If the students have been involved with the planning, the many duties necessary to have a successful camping trip will be evident. Each person will have volunteered (or have been volunteered by their peers, not by the teacher) to help in a specific activity. This establishes expectations that duties will be performed as arranged and agreed.

The supervising adults should assist the students with various chores. This provides both guidance and positive reinforcement of desired behavior. All campers need the opportunity to experience success in performing the various camping duties. However, one adult alone should be in charge of the trip and in the final decision-making position. All other adults should help carry out the activities and procedures as planned.

What plans should be made prior to the trip?

Detailed advanced planning is a key factor to a successful class camping trip. An effective and efficient way to plan is to utilize various checklists and "kaper charts" for duties. Students of any age are quite capable of making the majority of decisions if the areas of concern are brought to their attention. Initially, students may work in small groups to plan such items as menu, equipment needs, activity schedule, tenting groups, etc. Then, as the groups share their information with the entire class and decisions are finalized, the students become totally committed to the trip logistics and to

the cooperation demanded of them as members of the class.

Obviously, some areas of concern are the sole responsibility of the teacher, but student involvement should receive a high priority. Thus, the following topics should be addressed either by the leader or by the class members with leader assistance.

- **Trip Goals and Objectives:** Determine the purpose of the trip and prepare a schedule of activities with a time line.

- **Camping Skills:** Review the necessary skills in class prior to the the trip. These might include pitching a tent, lighting a gas lantern, canoeing, etc. In the field, under conditions that may be adverse, is not the best place to confront such needs for the first time.

- **Adult Leaders:** Adults who have camping experience and the necessary skills to lead planned activities are needed to support the teacher/leader. Possible sources are other teachers, teacher's aides, parents, local college students, members of local outing clubs, etc. A briefing/training session should be scheduled for this group, and attendance should be mandatory.

- **Travel Plans:** Transportation should be provided by the school because of liability; if private cars are needed, check on the liability issue with the school office. Then schedule the bus or cars, make arrangements for competent drivers, secure maps, plan a travel itinerary, assign students to specific cars if a bus is not available, arrange for the car shuttle if needed as in the case of a canoe trip, etc.

- **Camping Site:** Make arrangements in advance to reserve the camp site. Find out exactly what facilities are available, what fees are charged, and what permits are required.

- **Finances:** Participation fees need to be determined. These are based on estimated travel expenses, campground fees, food costs, and miscellaneous items. If students are paying part or all of the costs, they need to pay in advance. Forms should be prepared to record all payments and expenses.

- **Weather:** Consider weather conditions, plan for possible extremes to prevent emergency situations, and have a contingency plan. To be best prepared, check with the most competent weather information service within 24 hours of the trip.

- **Kaper Chart:** A kaper chart displays duties with corresponding names so that it is clear at a glance who is assigned what chore. This method enables the duties to be evenly distributed and gives every person specific responsibilities and opportunities. Possible

duties, as listed previously, include pitching tents, gathering firewood, fire building, cooking, cleanup, evening campfire songs, evening campfire games/program, loading equipment, cleaning campsite before departing, etc. The chart could also show who tents together and who rides in specific cars.

- **Meals:** Plan the menu and prepare a form that displays both the menu and a list of requested food items to prepare it. Include a staples and supplies list and an equipment list. Don't forget recipes and condiments.

- **Equipment:** Categorized lists of equipment--personal (required and optional) and group--should be compiled. Group equipment includes camping gear such as tents, tarps, lanterns, etc.; cooking supplies such as stoves, cook pots, spatulas, spoons, fire building tools, etc.; clean-up materials such as dish pans, pans to heat water, etc.; storage containers such as ice chests, water jugs, etc; and eating utensils such as plates, cups, forks, etc. Such group equipment will probably need to be borrowed if the school does not own any, but individuals are responsible for their personal gear.

- **Safety:** The saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," is worth serious consideration. Safety should be stressed in all phases of planning as well as on the trip itself.

- **Emergency Plans:** The leader should have a list of the parents' home and work telephone numbers. Awareness of any medical restrictions, allergies, physical limitations and special medications is necessary. Camping equipment should include a fully equipped first-aid kit, perhaps prepared by the school nurse or doctor. A specific adult with first-aid training and/or certification should be placed in charge. Identify and write down emergency telephone numbers and the location of the nearest hospital or emergency clinic. An emergency plan should specify who will go with the patient and who will stay with the group.

- **Group Rules and Regulations:** All possible rules should be discussed and agreed upon prior to the trip. They might include a desired dress code, the type of footwear appropriate, desired conduct, etc. Any of these can become an issue and should be confronted in advance. Students who do not agree to abide by these rules should not go on the trip. Some trip leaders choose to have their students sign a sheet acknowledging the objectives of the trip and the rules and regulations.

- **School Policies and Procedures:** Check with school administrators regarding such items as administrative permission for the trip, the form to be used for parental permission, travel arrangements, use of adult leaders other than school personnel, liability, handling of the trip expenses, available equipment, etc. A list of all students making the trip, the travel itinerary, and the activity schedule, along with any other information requested, should be filed with the principal. Parents should also be apprised of the objectives of the trip, the activity schedule, and the travel itinerary.

What follow-up activities can make use of the camping experience?

Since the camping trip has educational goals, every effort should be made for the classroom teachers to use various aspects of the camping expeience as a follow-up. It can be used to enhance learning in the various curriculum areas, i.e., language arts, science, history, physical education, etc. Even teachers who did not accompany the group can relate to the experiences in a positive way if they are informed of the details of the trip.

Other possible follow-up activities include the following:

- Cleaning and returning all equipment.
- Writing thank-you notes to those who assisted in any way.
- Obtaining a written evaluation from each adult helper.
- Preparing a written report, one from each student of specific activities and insights and perhaps a trip critique.

The trip leader should definitely compile a summary report to document the trip and to help plan future trips. It could contain the following lists and information:

- Trip objectives.
- Names of students who made the trip.
- Names of adult leaders, along with their addresses, telephone numbers, and responsibilities.
- Travel itinerary and activity schedule.
- Total trip costs: travel, food, campground fee, and miscellaneous expenses.
- Addresses and telephone numbers of campground, sites visited, etc.
- Copies of all forms and lists used.
- Conclusions drawn from evaluations of adult helpers and students.
- Notations on positive aspects of the trip.
- Problems encountered and ways to avoid them in the future.

Where may additional information on planning a camping trip be obtained?

The potential benefits of a class camping trip are limitless when adequate planning takes place. To help plan a successful trip the following resources are suggested:

Camping Skills and Trip Planning

American Red Cross. **Standard First Aid and Personal Safety**, 2nd Edition. Garden City, NY:Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1979.

Boy Scouts of America. **Fieldbook**. North Brunswick, NJ:Boy Scouts of America, 1976.

Leister, B. **Trip Leaders Guide: Outdoor Expeditions and Classes.** White River Junction, VT:Hartford Middle School, 1973.

Mitchell, A.V., Robberson, J.D., and Obley, J.W. **Camp Counseling**, 5th Edition. Philadelphia:W.B. Saunders Company, 1977.

Project Adventure. **Going Camping? A Basic Guide to Camping with Studerts.** Hamilton, MA:Project Adventure, 1977. ED 148 549.

Adventure Activities

American Red Cross. **Canoeing.** Garden City, NY:Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977.

Bridge, R. **Bike Touring.** San Francisco, CA:Sierra Club Books, 1979.

Darst, P.W., and Armstrong, G.P. **Outdoor Adventure Activities for School and Recreation Programs.** Minneapolis, MN:Burgess Publishing Company, 1980.

Hart, J. **Walking Softly in the Wilderness**, 2nd Edition. San Francisco, CA:Sierra Club Books, 1984.

Jensen, C.R. **Winter Touring: Cross-Country Skiing and Snowshoeing.** Minneapolis, MN:Burgess Publishing Company, 1977.

Rohnke, K. **Cranking Out Adventure: A Bike Leader's Guide to Trial and Error Touring.** Hamilton, MA:Project Adventure, 1977. ED 148 550.

Program Administration

Barnett, T.L. and Flora, S.R. **Christian Outdoor Education.** Duluth, MN:Camping Guideposts, 1982.

Donaldson, G.W., and Swan,M.D. **Administration of ECO-Education (Handbook for Administrators of Environmental/Conservation/Outdoor Education Programs).** Washington, DC:AAHPERD, 1979. ED 183 383.

Ford, P.M. **Principles and Practices of Outdoor/Environmental Education.** New York:John Wiley & Sons, 1981.

Hammerman, D.R., Hammerman, W.M., and Hammerman, E.L. **Teaching in the Outdoors,** 3rd Edition. Danville, IL:The Interstate Printers & Publishers, Inc., 1984.

Lewis, C.A. **The Administration of Outdoor Education Programs.** Dubuque, IA:Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1975. ED 144 777.

Link, M. **Outdoor Education: A Manual for Teaching in Nature's Classroom.** Englewood Cliffs, NJ:Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981.

Staley, F.A. **Outdoor Education for the Whole Child.** Dubuque, IA:Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1979. ED 173 000.

van der Smissen, B. **Legal Liability--Adventure Activities.** Las Cruces, NM:ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1980. ED 187 500.

Outdoor/Environmental Education Activities

Bachert, E.,Jr., and Snooks, E.L. **Outdoor Education Equipment: Plans for Easy-to-Make Items.** Danville, IL:The Interstate Printers & Publishers, Inc., 1974. ED 086 437.

Bachert, R.E.,Jr., Editor. **Eco-Sketch: Ideas for Environmental Education.** Martinsville, IN:American Camping Association, 1976.

Brown, R.E., and Mouser, G.W. **Techniques for Teaching Conservation Education.**

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Minneapolis, MN:Burgess Publishing Company, 1970.

Brown, V. **The Amateur Naturalist's Handbook.** Englewood Cliffs, NJ:Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980.

Ford, P.M. **ECO-ACTS: A Manual of Ecological Activities.** Eugene,OR:University of Oregon, 1983.

Hernbrode, W.R., Editor. **Multidisciplinary Wildlife Teaching Activities.** Columbus, OH:ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education, Ohio State University, 1978. ED 162 897.

Knapp, C.E., and Goodman, J. **Humanizing Environmental Education: A Guide for Leading Nature and Human Nature Activities.** Martinsville, IN:American Camping Association, 1981.

Milliken, M., Hamer, A.F., and McDonald, E.C., **Field Manual for Outdoor Learning.** Minneapolis, MN:Burgess Publishing Company, 1968.

OBIS: Outdoor Biology Instructional Strategies. Berkeley, CA:Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, 1975.

Project Adventure. **Teaching Through Adventure: A Practical Approach.** Hamilton, MA:Project Adventure, 1976. ED 148 548.

Swan, M.D., Editor. **Tips and Tricks in Outdoor Education,** 3rd Edition. Danville, IL:The Interstate Printers & Publishers, Inc., 1983.

Swanson, R.L. **Stepping Outdoors, Teacher's Guide, Part I:Natural and Social Sciences for Understanding Our World.** Sacramento, CA:California State Department of Parks and Recreation, 1980. ED 188 868.

van der Smissen, B., and Goering, O.H. **A Leader's Guide to Nature-Oriented Activities.** Ames, IA:Iowa State University Press, 1977.

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